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SIPDIS

PASS TO KATHERINE COOK AND RACHEL RIGBY AT DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR, DRL IZSOLDOS, AND WHA/BSC KBEAMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [EIND](#) [ETRD](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [PA](#)

SUBJECT: CHILD AND FORCED LABOR IN GOODS PRODUCTION

REF: STATE 43120

¶1. (U) This cable responds to the Department of Labor's request for information on the use of forced labor and exploitative child labor in the production of Paraguayan goods as mandated in the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (reftel). Per reftel, this cable focuses on labor used to produce goods; it does not focus on the children working in forced or exploitative labor conditions in the Paraguayan services industry, including street children.

GOODS PRODUCED

¶2. (U) Goods produced using forced or exploitative child labor are grouped according to whether they are finished (processed) or unfinished (unprocessed); types of exploitation and working conditions vary according to these factors. In addition, because most cases of forced labor in Paraguay involve children, forced labor is referred to as "child labor" unless otherwise noted.

-- Finished Goods: According to International Labor Organization (ILO) Director Bernardo Puente and Ministry of Justice and Labor (MJT) Director of International Norms Veronica Lopez, finished goods, including bricks and lime, are produced by hundreds, perhaps thousands, of child laborers.

-- Unfinished Goods: Puente and Lopez noted that agricultural products grown and harvested using forced and exploitative child labor include cotton; sugar cane; corn; soy; sesame; wheat; mandioca; and stevia, an artificial sweetener. Child labor is also prevalent in livestock raising. They indicated that child laborers are most frequently employed in cotton and sugar cane harvesting.

-- Goods that could merit further research: Puente and Lopez mentioned that other goods produced, including tobacco, crafts, garments, unfinished wood and wood products, do not typically involve forced or exploitative child labor. Children usually work with their families to produce these goods. However, given the widespread use of forced and exploitative child labor present in many Paraguayan industries, further research is merited regarding child labor in these sectors.

TYPES OF EXPLOITATION

¶3. (U) Ministry of Justice and Labor International Norms Director Veronica Lopez, Prosecutor Teresa Martinez of the

Public Ministry, and NGO Movement for Paz, Disarmament and Liberty (MPDL) Director Eduardo Allende noted the following types of exploitation in Paraguayan goods production:

-- Finished Goods: Children and forced laborers often work in unsafe and unsanitary conditions with improper equipment and poor ventilation, and in confined spaces with extreme temperatures. Most work is manual and requires repetitive movement, and in some cases, heavy lifting. Workers are frequently exposed to harmful chemical substances used to process goods, dangerous work processes, and unclean and unsafe working environments. Child laborers are often treated as adults, performing strenuous activities and working long hours. Moreover, they often receive inadequate job training, and industrial accidents are common. Many do not attend school or attend infrequently.

-- Unfinished Goods: Children and forced laborers usually work in fields performing all aspects of agricultural production, particularly harvesting and field burning. They frequently wear inadequate clothing and are exposed to the elements for long periods of time. Many lack the tools they need, including gloves and machetes, to plant, cultivate, or harvest crops. Most work is manual and requires repetitive movement, and in some cases, heavy lifting. These laborers are frequently exposed to adverse working conditions and pesticides (agrottoxins) that negatively impact their health. Many do not attend school or attend infrequently. (NOTE: This is particularly true for child laborers engaged in cotton production. The summer cotton growing season overlaps with the school year, forcing some child laborers to miss school for long periods of time. END NOTE.)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

14. (U) The following sources of information refer to forced labor and exploitative child labor (in chronological order). The most relevant sources are highlighted with an asterik (*).

- Interview with Bernardo Puente, ILO, 2008.*
- Interview with Veronica Lopez, Ministry of Justice and Labor, 2008.*
- Interview with Teresa Martinez, Public Ministry, 2008.*
- Interview with Eduardo Allende, MPDL Paraguay, 2008.*
- Interview with Rosa Otazu, Children and Adolescent's Secretariat, 2008.
- "National Report on Human Development," United Nations Development Program, 2008.*
- "Paraguay: International Rights of Work," ILO, 2008.
- "2007 Report on Children and Adolescents," Children and Adolescents Secretariat, 2007.*
- "Human Rights Report," Paraguay Human Rights Coordinator (CODEHUPY), 2007.
- "Human Rights Situation in Paraguay," Committee of Churches for Emergency Help (CIPAE), 2007.
- "The Paraguayan Infant and Adolescent Worker, 2001-04" International Labor Organization (ILO), 2007.*
- "Truths and Challenges of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Infants and Adolescents," ILO, 2007.
- "Investment in the Family," ILO, 2007.
- "Demand for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Adolescents: The Case for Paraguay," ILO, 2007.

-- "Report on Civil Society in the Rural Context, 2000-05,"
Tierraviva, 2006.

-- "Consulting Forum: Making a National Juvenile Law and
Politic," Paraguay Youth Network, 2006.

-- "Country Programme Document for Paraguay," UN Children's
Fund (UNICEF), 2006.*

-- "Sexual Commercial Exploitation of Children and
Adolescents," ILO, 2005.

-- "Income Generation," ILO, 2005.

-- "Application of Legislation in Argentina and Paraguay,"
ILO, 2005.

-- "Prevention and Withdrawal," ILO, 2005.

-- "Paid Domestic Work in Paraguay," ILO, 2005.

-- "Institutional Sensibilization and Strengthening," ILO,
2005.

-- "Rural Infant Work in Canindeyu, Paraguay," ILO, 2005.*

-- "Scream," ILO, 2002.*

NARRATIVE

15. (U) Specific information and statistics on forced labor
or exploitative child labor is scarce in Paraguay. Some data
are available through the Director General for Statistics,
Surveys, and Censuses (DGEEC), the Ministry of Education and
Culture (MEC), ILO, UNICEF, and NGO studies. ILO's Puente
and the MJT's Lopez estimated that thousands of Paraguayan
children are involved in forced and exploitative labor
practices. Many are unpaid or underpaid, lack health
benefits, and do not attend school. Although adult forced
labor likely exists in Paraguay, no information is available.
Data available can be corroborated with the DGEEC, MEC, MJT,
ILO, UNICEF, and local NGOs MPDL, CODEHUPY, and CIPAE. The
sources listed above and individuals cited in this cable can
corroborate the information contained in this cable.

-- Types of work performed: Most of these laborers perform
manual and unskilled labor. See "types of exploitation"
previously outlined for more information.

-- Working conditions: Vary by location. Those involved in
forced labor or exploitative child labor often work in
substandard and hazardous working conditions.

-- Age: Most forced or exploited laborers are between the
ages of five and 17 years of age.

-- Gender: More girls are involved in exploitative child
labor until the age of 12; between the ages of 12 and 17,
more boys are involved in exploitative child labor. The
MPDL's Allende noted that a direct correlation exists between
the type of good produced and the average age of the child
laborer. Girls under age 12 frequently pick cotton, an
activity best performed with small fingers; brick and lime
production requires the ability to withstand harsh working
conditions, and boys over 12 typically work in these
factories.

-- Ethnic backgrounds of workers: These workers are
primarily Paraguayans or Brazilian citizens living in
Paraguay (Brasiguayos).

-- How they became involved: Most child laborers work in
these conditions out of necessity. Many of their parents are
unemployed or underemployed, and these parents encourage
their children to work in order to support the family. Some
child laborers work for acquaintances or other family

members. In cases where the child laborers are coerced, non-remunerated, or trafficked, the parents typically permit their children to work or be trafficked in exchange for monetary compensation or promises of educational opportunities and a better life.

-- Physical and psychological risks: Numerous, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, substandard working conditions, and threats of violence and death for failure to comply with orders. Children who are victims of forced or exploitative labor also face the prospect of alienation from their families or local communities after returning home.

-- Debt arrangements: Some forced labors enter into indentured servitude in exchange for passage to another country. Domestically, most child laborers work for little or no money, and are often forced to do so by their employers or parents.

-- Freedom to leave workplace: Most child laborers who produce goods have limited freedom of movement. Most remain at their place of employment at the urging of their parents or through coercion.

-- Regions/locations where they work: Most of these laborers work domestically. Others emigrate to Argentina, Brazil, Spain, and Italy. In Paraguay, most child labor occurs in eastern Paraguay in the construction industry and agricultural sector. ILO's Puente noted that child labor is common in small-scale brick and lime factories in Cordillera and Concepcion Departments. The United States has large Paraguayan communities in New York, Texas, and Kansas. There have been no known cases of forced labor or exploitative child labor of Paraguayans in the United States in the recent years.

-- How long they have been in this situation: Varies. Many children are involved in forced or exploitative labor long term. Some quit, fall victim to industrial or agrarian accidents, or are forced out by their employers once they are no longer deemed useful.

-- Estimated numbers of people in the situations: Thousands of children are victims of forced labor or exploitative child labor. It is unknown how many adults are victims of forced labor in Paraguay.

INCIDENCES

16. (U) The following instances of exploitative child labor are indicative of a larger problem in the production of both finished and unfinished goods.

-- Child rescue from lime factory: ILO's Puente recounted the December 2007 rescue of child laborers from a lime factory in Ita Kua, Concepcion Department. National Police and prosecutors coordinated the rescue with assistance from the Ultima Hora newspaper. Puente and the MJT's Lopez noted that child labor in lime and brick factories is especially widespread in Cordillera and Concepcion departments and that the Ita Kua lime factory is one of many employing child laborers.

-- Child labor in Canindeyu: MPDL's Allende shared the results of a study of child labor practices in Canindeyu, a rural department in eastern Paraguay. Allende studied 246 cases of child labor in 2004 and noted that exploitative child labor is common.

17. (U) The host government, UNICEF, and the ILO have worked together to implement targeted assistance programs to combat forced and exploitative child labor in goods production. Some are effective but limited in scope. Few, if any, host government, industry, or NGO efforts have been proven to significantly reduce or eliminate forced or exploitative child labor. These programs include:

-- "Hugs Program" (Programa Abrazos, in Spanish): The government's Social Action Secretariat (SAS) pays parents of street children a monthly stipend to send their children to school. This program has had some impact in Asuncion.

-- "Tekopora": SAS program that pays parents in rural communities to send their children to school. This program has had some impact in rural communities that have received these funds, notably in Curuguaty, Canindeyu Department.

-- "Scream": MEC adopted the ILO's "Scream" child labor intervention campaign and methodology to assist administrators and public school teachers in identifying child laborers and protecting them from exploitation. MEC occasionally holds seminars to educate its staff about the issue of child labor within the framework of "Scream."

-- "Extended School" (Escuela Extendida, in Spanish): This is a program developed by the ILO and UNICEF now under consideration by the MEC. The program would pay parents a stipend to send their children to school to participate in extracurricular activities.

18. (U) POC for this request is Embassy Asuncion Human Rights Officer Michael Edwards, telephone: 011-595-21-213-715, e-mail: edwardsmg@state.gov.

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